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Report of
COMMITTEE ON MOTION PICTURE ACTIVITIES.
1914.



U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Department of Agriculture.

COMMITTEE ON MOTION PICTURE ACTIVITIES.

Washington, D. C.,
November 30, 1914.

REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE ON THE
WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON MOTION PICTURE ACTIVITIES.

Sir:

The work of the Committee on Motion Picture Activities is the logical outgrowth of the great popularity which motion pictures have attained, and the possibilities they offer in attracting audiences to demonstration meetings and as a means of promoting agricultural improvement.

Prior to the establishment of the Committee, several of the individual Bureaus in the past had made sporadic use of films taken either by their own regular photographers or procured from commercial companies. The experience of these Bureaus in using these films was that motion pictures certainly stimulated attendance on meetings, increased interest in and understanding of the work of the Department, and were a valuable adjunct to agricultural propaganda. The question of how effective films could be made in the direct teaching of processes was, and still is, open.

Early in the year 1913 it became apparent that motion pictures had gained so strong a place in the life of the people of the country that the Department could no longer neglect an investigation into the possibilities of this medium of publicity in its educational field work. For this reason, the Secretary on September 12, 1913, in Memorandum 41, appointed a temporary committee to investigate the subject and, if entrance to the field seemed desirable, to report plans whereby the use of motion pictures in agricultural education could be placed on a stable basis as a Departmental project. This committee at once began its investigations, and after some experiments came to the conclusion that while the direct educational value of motion pictures could not be definitely predicated, the employment of films offered other advantages which warranted the Department in using them in its extension work.

In the absence of any facilities for making the films, the committee endeavored to establish satisfactory cooperative relations with commercial film companies, with the object of having these firms do the actual photography and furnish the Department, under reasonable financial arrangements, with such positive copies of films as it might care to pur-

COMMITTEE ON MOTION PICTURE ACTIVITIES

Washington, D. C.,
November 27, 1934.

REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE OF THE
WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON MOTION PICTURE ACTIVITIES.

Sir:

The work of the Committee on Motion Picture Activities is the logical outgrowth of the great popularity which motion pictures have attained, and the possibilities they offer in attracting audiences to demonstrate such activities and as a means of presenting a national program.

Prior to the establishment of the Committee, several of the individual members in the past had made extensive use of films taken either by themselves or by others. The experience of those who have taken these films has revealed a great interest in and attendance at meetings, and a general interest in and understanding of the work of the Department, and were a valuable adjunct to agricultural propaganda. The question of how effective films could be made in the future regarding a program was, and still is, open.

Early in the year 1933 it became apparent that motion pictures had gained so strong a place in the life of the people of the country that the Department could no longer neglect an investigation into the possibilities of this new medium of publicity in its educational field work. On this subject, the Secretary on September 12, 1933, in Memorandum No. 1, appointed a temporary committee to investigate the subject and, if possible, to set up a permanent committee. The committee was composed of the use of motion pictures in agricultural education and was placed on a permanent basis as a Departmental project. It is believed that the committee has made a considerable amount of progress and has reached the conclusion that this the most successful means of presenting such activities could not be definitely established, the committee has found other advantages which warranted the effort and in which it is engaged in its educational work.

In the course of its investigation, the committee has been very much interested in the possibilities of motion pictures in the Department's educational work. It has found that the Department has been very successful in its educational work, and that the Department has been very successful in its educational work. It has found that the Department has been very successful in its educational work, and that the Department has been very successful in its educational work.

chase and use. One or two fairly satisfactory films were developed under this system, but it soon became apparent that the Department could not, under this arrangement, establish adequate censorship over its own subjects or make satisfactory financial arrangements covering the purchase of films made with its cooperation.

The temporary committee, therefore, asked to be discharged and recommended that a permanent committee be appointed, and that the Department at once install, in the Division of Publications as a feature of the Section of Illustrations, a complete laboratory for the taking, developing and printing of its own films. This action was approved by the Secretary in Memorandum 55, dated December 18, 1913, under which the present Committee on Motion Picture Activities was constituted. The permanent committee at once took steps to secure equipment for the laboratory located in the Section of Illustrations, and in a short time this laboratory was equipped with the necessary cameras, printing and developing machinery, and other devices for the proper prosecution of the work on an experimental scale. In this connection it might be pointed out that the Department was fortunate in having on its photographic staff several men with the necessary experience and skill to take and develop the pictures. Following the experiments in this field by amateur photographers, the actual work of the new laboratory in making films was begun the latter part of 1913, when the visit of the Club children to Washington was filmed. Under the plan of operation approved by the Secretary on recommendation of the committee, the several Bureaus submit scenarios to the committee for approval and these, when approved, are produced by the laboratory. Traveling and maintenance expenses of the photographer and the cost of materials, are defrayed by the originating Bureau.

The work accomplished by the motion picture laboratory from December, 1913, to the present time is indicated in the following list of films:

<u>Completed</u>	<u>Negative</u> (feet)	<u>Positive</u> (feet)
<u>Office of the Secretary:</u>		
Chrysanthemum Show of the Department of Agriculture	200	200
<u>Bureau of Animal Industry:</u>		
Cooperative Cow Testing in Vermont	1000	1000
Horse Breeding Experiments at Middlebury, Vermont, Front Royal, Virginia, and Lexington, Kentucky	4000	900
Silo Construction	1200	
Poultry Investigations	400	
Poison Effects on Sheep	200	

List of films continued

<u>Completed</u>	<u>Negative</u> (feet)	<u>Positive</u> (feet)
<u>Bureau of Plant Industry:</u>		
Boy and Girl Club Winners on Prize Trip to Washington	2000	4000
Bridge Grafting of Trees	200	200
Spraying and Pruning of Trees	300	
Congressional Seed Distribution	800	800
Strawberry Industry of Warren County, Kentucky	2000	2000
<u>Bureau of Chemistry:</u>		
Destruction of Condemned Goods	200	200
Commercial Canning of Corn	2600	
Sardine Industry in Maine	3400	4000
<u>Forest Service:</u>		
Work of Forest Products Laboratory at Madison, Wisconsin	1000	1000
The National Forests	12000	
<u>Office of Public Roads:</u>		
Laboratory Work of the Office of Public Roads	1000	1000
Road Building and Testing Scenes	5400	

Under Way

Bureau of Animal Industry:
Boys' Pig Club Work

Bureau of Plant Industry:
A Day With the County Agent.

The laboratory has also printed or developed for the Bureaus and Offices 3100 feet of film.

Cooperation With the Panama Exposition Board and Other Departments.

Several of the films listed above have been made in cooperation with the Panama-Pacific Exposition Board, with a view to having them shown first in San Francisco as a part of the Government's exhibit. In these cases, the Panama Exposition Board cooperated by sharing in the cost of material and travel of photographers, or by supplying skilled labor in the laboratory.

The Panama-Pacific Exposition Board, having seen the

County
State
City
Post Office
Telephone
Address
Room

Bureau of Entomology
Department of Commerce
Commercial Canning of Corn
Grain Industry in Maine

U.S. Forest Service
Forest Products Laboratory
Forest Research Station
The National Forests

U.S. Forest Service
Laboratory Work of the Office of Public
Forest Building and Testing Rooms

Under

U.S. Forest Service
Forest Products Laboratory
Forest Research Station

U.S. Forest Service
Forest Products Laboratory
Forest Research Station

U.S. Forest Service
Forest Products Laboratory
Forest Research Station

U.S. Forest Service
Forest Products Laboratory
Forest Research Station

Several of the lines above have been used in
 connection with the Bureau of Entomology and Plant
 Quarantine, and have been shown to be of great
 value in the control of insects. The Bureau of
 Entomology and Plant Quarantine, U.S. Department
 of Agriculture, has been very helpful in the
 control of insects. The Bureau of Entomology and
 Plant Quarantine, U.S. Department of Agriculture,
 has been very helpful in the control of insects.

successful work done by the Department's photographers, asked the Department to allow its operators to make films of certain subjects in other Departments. As a result, the following films have been taken for the Board, and in cooperation with the other Departments which have jurisdiction over the subjects depicted:

	<u>Negative</u> (feet)	<u>Positive</u> (feet)
Egg rolling on White House Grounds (Exposition Board)		
Destroying Wrecks Impeding Navigation (Treasury)	600	600
May Festival of Kindergarten Pupils (Bureau of Education)	800	800
Drill of Cadet Corps on White House Ellipse (Exposition Board)	200	200
Repairing the Original Star Spangled Banner (Smithsonian Institution)	75	75
What Uncle Sam Will Do for Two Cents (Post Office Department)	3400	
Inspection Boat "Tarragon" (Department of Commerce)	800	
Physical Culture Work in District Schools (Bureau of Education)	2000	
Zoological Park of Washington	1000	

The laboratory has also printed or developed for the Exposition Board 10,400 feet of film, on subjects taken for the Board by other photographers.

Although the laboratory has at present only an experimental equipment, it has actually photographed for the Department and the Exposition Board 27 subjects, aggregating 46,775 feet of excellent negative, and from this negative has already printed over 20,075 feet of positive film suitable for public projection. The remainder of this negative is being printed as rapidly as the limited equipment permits.

The ability of the Department's photographers is established by the fact that the number of feet of negative taken which was not found photographically excellent and worthy of use in positives, has been much smaller than the losses commonly allowed in commercial laboratories. A conservative estimate places the total cost of this film, for salaries, travel and material, at less than \$8,000, or an average of 12-1/3 cents per foot of useful film. At the rates ordinarily charged by commercial houses for photographing and printing subjects, this film would have cost the Department more than \$25,000. Aside from the cost, however, the Department has the satisfaction of complete censorship over all material shown with its official title, and in addition, owns the negative and is, therefore, in a position to make, at actual cost

for material and labor, as many copies of positive as it needs.

Experimental Work in Motion Picture Art.

The first purpose of the laboratory is to enable the Department to produce economically, and under its complete control, educational films of a high degree of excellence. The ability of this laboratory to compete successfully with any of the outside motion picture specialists the committee believes has been fully demonstrated. It is apparent, also, that the Department is in a position to produce its subjects far more cheaply than would be possible under any cooperative arrangement with the commercial motion picture agencies. The greatest advantage, however, comes from the fact that the Department has absolute control over its scenarios and over the showing of any films bearing the Department's official sanction.

At the same time, those in charge of the laboratory have indicated a determination not merely to make it a manufactory of films, but to develop the laboratory on experimental lines, so that it will make contributions to motion picture art, especially as applied to educational work. Already the photographers have made fairly important discoveries in the problem of artificial lighting and in the adaptation of special lenses to filming scientific subjects. They also have shown a commendable spirit in refusing to resort to trick photography in showing subjects, where the making of honest negatives calls for great patience and operations extending over long periods of time. The committee is determined that where such subjects as the growth of a flower or the germination of a seed are to be shown, the film shall be an honest scientific record.

The success of the laboratory's experimental field work has led other Departments of the Government to ask permission to place some of their regular photographers in the laboratory for training and apprenticeship in motion picture photography. Wherever it is possible to accept such workers without interference with the Department's schedule, they have been made welcome and every facility afforded them to profit from the experience and equipment of the laboratory. When the laboratory leaves its present makeshift quarters in the old building and moves into the commodious and well arranged laboratory to be provided for it in the basement of the new building now under construction, those in charge can afford still further facilities to photographers from other Departments for study and observation of the work of the Department.

Investigation of Projectors.

To make motion pictures of the greatest practical service to the actual farmer, some means must be devised for show-

ing these motion pictures in schoolhouses, churches, and other meeting places away from the towns. This means that some method of projecting which does not call for electric current from public-service mains must be devised. The committee, therefore, has devoted considerable time to investigation of portable projectors as well as to a study of the different makes of standard projectors. The several makers of the large types of projectors have been given opportunity to demonstrate these machines before the committee. As rapidly as news came of the development of any type of smaller portable projector, the makers were invited to show it before the committee. As a general proposition, most of the portable projectors examined have certain inherent defects, such as tearing the film or showing too small a picture to be of any special service. There is, however, under development an aluminum projector weighing, with its case, about 20 pounds, which gives promise of usefulness. The difficulty with this machine, however, is that it calls for the use of electric current. The committee, therefore, is now investigating the possibility of equipping an ordinary automobile with an electric generator which will supply the small amperage needed for this or similar machines.

Other means of illumination, such as oxy-acetylene and similar gas lighting apparatus, were carefully investigated. These gas machines give a fairly satisfactory amount of light, but the apparatus necessary for the generating of the gas is so cumbersome and heavy as to make this method at present impracticable for countryside use. The committee, however, will continue its experimentation in these directions and is offering encouragement to inventors to develop portable machines of sufficient lightness and compactness for easy transportation by wagon or automobile and showing a picture clear and large enough for effective use as an adjunct to school or church demonstration work.

Miscellaneous Film Activities.

While the committee has worked toward the centralization of motion picture making, with the object of setting a high standard for all films developed by the Department, it has from time to time sanctioned the taking of films by individual photographers in the several Bureaus. This has been very convenient at times when emergencies arose and the regular motion picture operators were engaged in other parts of the field.

The following is a list of films secured independently by the individual Bureaus and independent Offices, either prior to or after the appointment of the committee:

Bureau of Animal Industry:

- Cattle at Seattle Exposition of 1909.
- Life History of Texas fever tick; Methods of dipping, etc.
- Cattle Industry in the South.
- Importation and Exportation of Live Stock.
- Inspecting Meat for the Navy.

Bureau of Plant Industry:

Plowing Contest; Farmers' Baseball Game; Country Agent at Work in Illinois (Farm Management) (Fair condition).

Office of Markets and Rural Organization:

Corn and Cotton Growing and Seed Selection in the South. (Amateur production)

Forest Service:

Uses of National Forest in Idaho (Negative made and in custody of Reclamation Service).

Commercially Made Films, Positives of Which
Are Owned by the Department.

In addition to the films developed by the Department's own photographers, several of the Bureaus have procured, from commercial motion picture firms and other sources, the subjects listed below:

Bureau of Entomology:

Bee Raising.

Office of Public Roads:

Macadam Road Construction.

Bureau of Animal Industry:

Poultry
From Cow to Consumer

Bureau of Plant Industry:

Harvesting the Bumper Wheat crop in 1914.

Forest Service:

Fire Fighting on Sierra National Forest, California.

Policy of the Department With Regard
to Motion Pictures.

In view of the fact that the laboratory of the Department is largely an experimental one and can photograph only a limited number of subjects, and complete only a few positives of its negatives, the Department has been unable to enter into any arrangement for the widespread showing of its films, either through its own agents or through cooperation with State Agricultural Colleges and other outside agencies. It has been impossible, with the present equipment, to prepare enough positive prints to meet the needs of the Department's own demonstration workers. For this reason, all requests from outside agencies to purchase, rent, or borrow the Department's films have been refused.

Considerable extension of the equipment of the laboratory will be necessary before the Department can fully meet its own needs for copies of its subjects. On the completion of the new building now under construction on B Street, S.W., the motion picture laboratory will gain possession of more commodious quarters, much better suited to its special work.

It is hoped, also, to add considerably to the equipment of this laboratory, so that the work may be expedited and a greater number of positives, of which the several Bureaus are in immediate need, may be perfected.

The establishment of any policy as to selling, renting or lending films to cooperating agencies, or making them available for release in motion picture theatres, or supplying them to the many churches, schools and other institutions which have asked to be allowed to show them, must be deferred until the Department's own demand is met, and until the laboratory facilities, staff and appropriations permit of expansion in this direction. In fact, before the Department can successfully undertake cooperation of this character without very heavy expenditures of Federal funds, it in all probability must secure legislation which will enable it to supply films to outside agencies in such a way that this phase of the work may be made self-supporting, or at least not allowed to become a serious drain on the Department's funds.

Under present conditions, the Department cannot sell its films, for the reason that any money received from this source must be turned back into the Treasury. The sale of a film, therefore, would simply mean that the Department would be forced to deplete its own special photographic appropriations although, of course, the general Government would be recompensed.

Experience of the Department in the Use of Motion
Pictures as an Adjunct to Demonstration Work
at Conferences and in Field Work.

Prior to the establishment of the Committee, several of the Bureaus had used films purchased from commercial companies or made by their own photographers, as adjuncts to the work of their speakers at conventions or in connection with special propaganda carried on by the field force.

The Bureau of Animal Industry made and is making considerable use of its film on tick eradication as a means of encouragement to Southern counties to construct dipping vats and require the dipping of herds. They have also made use of other pictures showing phases of meat handling and prize cattle, in familiarizing the public with the Department's methods and in encouraging improvement in breeding. This Bureau has also made very effective use of a fine film on poultry raising, made at Beltsville by a commercial company in cooperation with the Department. This film shows clearly the modern methods of poultry raising, and in addition, it is a film of great beauty and of interest to general audiences.

The Office of Roads has made effective use at gatherings of highway commissioners and other road building conferences, of certain films showing details of road construction in France and this country. Although these films did not show the actual

details of construction as clearly as films since made by the Department show them, the effect on the audiences was excellent. One film produced by the Office of Public Roads showing dust action of various types of roads under automobile traffic, was a particularly good object lesson in road improvement to meet modern conditions of traffic.

The Forest Service has secured one or two commercially made films showing methods of fighting forest fires, and one made in cooperation with the Reclamation Service showing uses of the national forests. These attracted favorable attention and proved to be welcome additions to programs of conventions and expositions at which they were shown. The fire fighting film was particularly effective in creating intelligent interest and cooperation in forest fire prevention.

The real tests of films in country districts, however, were made by the Rural Organization Service in cooperation with the Office of Farmers Cooperative Demonstration Work, and by the leaders of the Children's Club movements in the Office of Farm Management. The films shown had been hurriedly gathered and were frequently used before explanatory legends had properly been incorporated. With the exception of the poultry film purchased from a commercial company, and certain scenes in the films showing the visit to Washington of the Canning Club children, the material was not of a character to test fully the value of motion pictures in direct instruction in agriculture.

Through these agencies, the films were shown at country schoolhouses and churches, as well as in towns and villages, over a wide area in the South and in the Northwest. Those showing the films reported that the announcement that the motion picture exhibit was to be a feature of the lecture, attracted large audiences, even in bad weather and under difficult road conditions. In certain cases, the films were shown a few days before or after an ordinary stereopticon talk. In every case, the motion picture exhibit brought out 75 to 100 people, where stereopticon talks attracted only 10 to 20. Some of the lecturers asserted that the showing of the film had a direct educational effect, but the more experienced men held that the chief benefits were attracting larger audiences, the pleasure the people derived from seeing the pictures, and the aid to complete understanding of the lecture or subject that the pictures afforded. The pictures enabled those who saw them to visualize into concrete action the otherwise abstract points of the propaganda.

The pictures also served to break the ice for a more cordial reception of the new ideas, because they gave the people actual proof that the same methods are being used and endorsed, in actual practice, by prosperous farmers elsewhere.

For example, in the case of the cow testing film, the picturing of the actual work of the cow tester aroused general interest and familiarized the farmers with the procedure, so that they would have a better understanding of the various steps inaugurated by the agent on his first visit to their dairies. The value of the films in indirect education, in stimulating general interest in the subject, and as an element in propaganda, apparently justifies fully the extension of the Department's activities in this field.

Films of the Department have been shown at the Dry Farming Expositions, at Cornell University, and at the Forest Products Expositions, where they have been highly commended for their educational helpfulness.

Respectfully submitted,

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